Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme 2025

Guidelines for Applicants

For proposals commencing in 2025

Deadline: 5.30pm, Thursday 3 April 2025

Applicants with disabilities

The Arts Council makes every effort to provide reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities to engage with our services.

If you have a disability and need help with submitting your application, please contact us as early as possible before the deadline.

Contact: Disability Access Officer

Phone: 01 618 0200 or 01 618 0243

Email: access@artscouncil.ie

CONTENTS

Key points to remember

- This document contains important information about the Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme 2024 and how to go about making an application.

- In order to make an application, you **must** be registered for an Arts Council Online Services (OLS) account. If you do not have one, you can sign up for one [here]. Please note that it can take up to **five working days** for a new user to be registered on OLS, so give yourself plenty of time to do this ahead of the deadline.

- We strongly advise that you read this document carefully before beginning the process of making your application.

- We also strongly advise that you start the process early, and give yourself **plenty of time** to make your application.

- We recommend that you aim to upload your application **at least forty-eight hours** before the advertised deadline. That way, if you encounter a technical problem, you will have time to contact us so that we can assist you in resolving it.

- Please note that, on account of the large volume of applicants using the online system on the last day of the deadline, we cannot guarantee that we can resolve any technical issues you may have if you contact us **after 2.00pm on the day of the deadline**.

- Please read the following checklist carefully:

☐ I have read and understand these guidelines.

☐ In the event that I have had an issue, I have contacted the Arts Council for assistance well in advance of the deadline.

☐ I have filled in all of the sections of the application form relevant to my application.

☐ I have prepared all required supporting material as set out in these guidelines, and have this ready to upload.

☐ I have asked someone else to check over my application to make sure there are no errors and that nothing is missing.

Getting help with your application

If you have questions about using the Online Services website, visit the FAQ section on our website: www.artscouncil.ie/FAQs/online-services/

If you have a technical question about the online application process and your question is not answered in the FAQ section, you can email onlineservices@artscouncil.ie or call the Arts Council on

- o **01 618 0200**
- o **01 618 0243**

If you have a query about your application that is not technical in nature, you should email or phone the arts team to which you are applying for funding **at least forty-eight hours** before the advertised deadline. http://www.artscouncil.ie/Contact-us/Staff-and-adviser-lists/

To watch our YouTube guide on making an application, go to https://www.youtube.com/artscouncildemos

1. About the Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme 2025

1.1 Purpose and priorities of the scheme

The purpose of the Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme 2025 is to provide opportunities for babies and young children to explore and enjoy the arts with the support of artists, early years educators, school-age practitioners, families and carers. Priority will be given to proposals that provide meaningful opportunities for babies and young children to explore and engage with the arts; while supporting artists, early years educators, school-age practitioners, families and carers to collaborate, share learning, and develop their capacity in this area. Proposals should include a considered approach to documentation, evaluation and reflection, and should have the capacity to inform wider practice.

The scheme is open to artists and arts organisations that will collaborate with eligible services as set out in **Strand 1** and **Strand 2** below. Proposals that provide opportunities for older children attending school-age childcare to engage with the arts are also accepted through Strand 1 of this scheme. You should apply for **Strand 3** if you propose to work with a combination of services that meet the requirements of Strand 1 and other services that meet the requirements of Strand 2.

The scheme is open to all artform and arts-practice areas. We seek to support proposals across a diversity of artforms, and which are developed and delivered by a diversity of artists, arts organisations and services across Ireland. Particular priority will be given to proposals that take place in services working with children experiencing disadvantage and which have a focus on inclusion.

Please see the Arts Council Policy for Children and Young People's Arts for further information regarding Arts Council priorities in this area. In addition, proposals should align with Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, and the National Quality Guidelines for School Age Childcare Services, as appropriate. Applicants are encouraged to refer to the working principles for engaging with the arts in early learning and care in developing their proposals.

More information can be found here:

https://ncca.ie/aistear-the-early-childhood-curriculum-framework/

https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b66c5-national-quality-guidelines-for-school-age-childcare-services-guidelines-components-and-elements-september-2020/

https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/03e1c-draft-principles-for-the-facilitation-of-the-arts-in-promoting-play-and-creativity-in-early-learning-and-care/

Arts Council Policy for Children and Young People's Arts

Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme 2025: Guidelines for Applicants

All awards are informed by the Arts Council's ten-year strategy (2016–25), *Making Great Art Work: Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland* (see here: http://www.artscouncil.ie/arts-council-strategy/).

Strand 1: Early Learning and Childcare

This strand supports partnerships between artists/arts organisations and Tusla-registered early learning and care (ELC) and/or school-age childcare (SAC) services. Eligible services include community and private services, ELC services, ELC and SAC combined services, and stand-alone SAC services.

To locate and connect with a Tusla-registered ELC and/or SAC service in your area, contact your local City/County Childcare Committee. https://myccc.ie/. Alternatively:

- A full list of Tusla-registered ELC services can be accessed here: https://www.tusla.ie/preschool-services
- A full list of Tusla-registered SAC services can be accessed here: https://www.tusla.ie/school-age-services

In making your application, you will be asked for the ELC and/or SAC service's Tusla registration number. This number is a unique identifier applied to each service on registration with Tusla. The number represents: Tusla, the year of registration, the local-authority area and unique digits – e.g. TU2018KK998.

Strand 2: International Protection (birth–6-year-olds)

This strand supports partnerships between artists/arts organisations and those working with children from Ukraine and others who have been impacted by war, displacement and loss. Proposals should be centred in trauma-informed practice. Projects can be facilitated within local Stay and Play sessions, parent-and-toddler groups or other locations that support Ukrainian and other children seeking international protection from birth to 6 years of age.

Stay and Play sessions are facilitated parent-and-child groups established in response to the arrival of Ukrainian children and parents/carers, which offer play opportunities and parenting supports. They are managed locally by the City and County Childcare Committees and are typically housed within hotel or group-accommodation facilities.

To locate and connect with a Stay and Play session in your area, contact your local City and County Childcare Committee: https://myccc.ie/

Parent-and-toddler groups are informal meetings in local communities where parents/carers can socialise and their young children can play. Carers, grandparents, guardians and childminders are also welcome. Groups, including many Family Resource Centres across the country, have opened their doors to families from Ukraine and other children seeking international protection.

To locate and connect with a parent-and-toddler group in your area, contact your local city/county childcare committee. https://myccc.ie/

Strand 3: Combined Contexts

You should apply for this strand if your proposal includes services that meet the requirements of Strand 1 and other services that meet the requirements of Strand 2.

Additional information:

- Proposals should take place within a twelve-month period beginning in 2025. In order to provide sufficient time for proposals to be assessed and decisions to be communicated, proposals should have a start date no earlier than June 2025.
- Applicants may apply for a total maximum amount of **€40,000**.
- Applicants may propose to engage with one or more eligible services. **A draft MOU with each service** with which you propose to work should be completed and included with your proposal. Alternatively, **a draft MOU with the local City/County Childcare Committee** may be provided. This should confirm that you will be supported to identify and agree the services in which you will work should your proposal be successful.
- You should make sure to include sufficient time and resources to plan collaboratively, and to document, reflect on and share learning. If you are awarded funding, you will be asked to report on the delivery of your proposal.
- The total number of days the artist or arts organisation will engage with each service should be agreed in advance by the artist and service, and should be calculated to ensure artists are fairly paid for their time. This should include artists' time for planning and reflection, delivery of initiatives, and development of their practice. Please see the Arts Council Paying the Artist Policy when budgeting for artists' time and fees.
- Please see section **3.3** for details of the criteria against which all applications will be assessed – these are a) diversity; b) the quality and suitability of the proposal; c) the extent to which the proposal meets the purpose and priority of the award; and d) feasibility.
- Please see section **1.6** for required support material that will help you to demonstrate how your application meets these criteria and priorities.

1.2 Who can apply?

The scheme is open to artists and arts organisations based in the Republic of Ireland.

Artists/arts organisations must partner with one or more eligible services, and must include a draft MOU for each service that forms part of their proposal or a draft MOU with their local City/County Childcare Committee.

Artists/arts organisations may specialise in any artform or combination of artforms.

To be eligible to apply, you must be:

- Based/resident in the Republic of Ireland. We may consider your application if you are based outside the Republic of Ireland. However, your application would have to convince us that your proposal would benefit the arts in the Republic of Ireland.

- A professional practising artist, or an organisation working with professional practising artists. Even though individual artists involved in a proposal might not earn income continuously or exclusively from their arts practice, they must identify themselves and be recognised by their peers as professional practising artists.

> As part of its [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](), the Arts Council is committed to offering **equality of access, opportunity and outcomes** to all potential applicants regardless of their
>
> - Age
>
> - Civil or family status
>
> - Disability
>
> - Gender
>
> - Membership of the Traveller community
>
> - Race
>
> - Religion
>
> - Sexual orientation
>
> - Socio-economic background.
>
> The Arts Council particularly welcomes applications that are representative of the diversity of Irish society, including but not limited to any of the characteristics outlined above, and/or initiatives that deliver equitable opportunities or outcomes for those involved.

1.3   Who is the applicant?

The applicant is the person or organisation that will receive any grant offered and that must accept the terms and conditions of that grant.

Any grant we offer will only be paid into a bank account held in the name of the applicant.

All the documents provided must be in the name of the applicant (either an individual artist or arts organisation) – e.g. if you apply for funding under the name Máire de Barra, then all the documents you provide, including bank and tax details, must be in that name. We will not accept variations such as Mary Barry or Barry Studios.

1.4   What may you apply for?

The maximum amount that may be awarded to each successful application is:

€40,000

How much funding should you apply for?

In applying for this funding, you are required to submit a budget listing all items of income and expenditure relating to your proposal.

The maximum amount you may request is the difference between the **proposed expenditure** and the **proposed income** you indicate in the budget.

- Proposed expenditure should include artist fees to be funded by the Arts Council if your application is successful* along with all other costs, such as additional fees, technical and administrative costs, documentation, promotion and publicity costs, performance/exhibition costs, etc. All costs must relate directly to the activities within your proposal
- Proposed income should include the value of in-kind investment from the partner services or other partners, and any income you expect to receive from other funders, etc. where relevant.

It is important to reflect all in-kind support** in both income and expenditure, so reflecting the full and true value of your proposal.

* Note on artists' pay	The Arts Council is committed to improving the pay and conditions of artists. We have published a policy on the fair and equitable remuneration and contracting of artists. It is important that you read this policy in advance of making your application. You will be asked as part of the application process to set out how you will ensure proper pay and conditions for the artists that you work with. This will help us assess the feasibility of your application.
** Note on in-kind support	A key feature of the Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme 2025 is the in-kind support offered by partner services and other public partners, such as staff time that will be allocated to coordinate and participate in the proposal and to document and reflect on the outcomes; a space in which activities can take place; and associated overheads. Ideally, you should put a financial value on this so that the contribution the partners are making to the real value of your proposal is clear. You should think of in-kind support both as expenditure and as income: whatever amount you declare on the expenditure side you should also declare on the income side so that your budget balances and so that it is clear that you are not seeking Arts Council support for these costs.

	Time contributed by directors or board members may not be reckoned as an in-kind cost.

You are asked to indicate income, expenditure and amount requested at two stages during your application:

- Online, when you initiate the application (totals only)
- In section 3 of the application form

Make sure that the totals are the same in both; and make sure that the amount requested equals TOTAL EXPENDITURE minus TOTAL INCOME.

Access costs for artists or participants[1] with disabilities

We are committed to making our funding schemes and the work we fund accessible to everyone. To meet this goal, we offer financial supports to remove barriers for artists and participants with disabilities. These are known as disability access costs.

We take the description of disability from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, together with Irish legislation and case law. We broadly include all people with disabilities. For example, people with physical, medical, cognitive, intellectual, learning, emotional, or sensory impairments.

There are two types of disability access costs that you may need to consider for your application: personal disability access costs and audience disability access costs.

The Arts Council provides separate funding for personal disability access costs in addition to your core budget. You must fund audience disability access costs from within your core budget.

1. Personal disability access costs

These supports should help you to remove barriers for artists or participants with disabilities who are delivering your proposal. For example:

- You
- The main artists, individuals, groups, or organisations involved in your proposal
- Partners, mentors or collaborators
- Production staff
- Core staff or key administrative personnel.

Examples of supports are, but not limited to, the following:

- An ISL interpreter for a participant or participants
- Services of an access support worker
- Additional rehearsal or studio time.

---

[1] The Arts Council defines participants as those who express themselves creatively by taking part in artistic activities.

Note: you can apply for these costs in addition to the maximum amount available for the award.

2. Audience disability access costs

These are costs for making your work accessible to people with disabilities. We want to ensure that more people enjoy high-quality arts experiences and that everyone can access and enjoy the work we fund. Access for disabled audience members should be considered a normal part of your work.

Examples of supports to make your work accessible to your audience may be:

- Having an ISL interpreter for your event or performance
- Using an audio-description service
- Making your website compatible with screen readers
- Producing exhibition materials in other formats such as Braille or audio.

Note: the Arts Council does not currently provide additional funding for these costs. You must include these costs in your core application budget.

How to apply for disability access costs

If you include disability access costs in your proposal, you must upload a document listing these costs with your supporting material. An optional template is available on the Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme funding page of the Arts Council website. You must also show the costs in two separate lines in your application form:

- A line for personal disability access costs
- A line for audience disability access costs.

Note: whether you use your own document or the Arts Council template, the two types of disability access costs must be shown separately.

What if the funding I am offered is less than I requested?

If you are offered funding that is less than you requested, we will discuss with you how you plan to deliver your proposed activity when reviewing the revised budget. We will also discuss an appropriate adjustment to your disability access costs.

How do I claim my personal disability access costs?

If your application is successful, we will give you information on how to draw down your funding. Personal disability access costs are drawn down separately from your core funding. You may be asked to complete a short report on how you used these funds.

1.5   What costs can I not apply for?

You should **not** apply to the Arts Council for costs those that are already covered by other public funds (e.g. rental of space, overheads and staff time, where artists are visiting a service). However, you are encouraged to capture these items as part of your in-kind income and expenditure to reflect the full value of your proposal.

You cannot apply for:

- Costs that do not fit the purpose of the programme
- Ongoing overhead or administrative costs
- Capital costs.

1.6   Required supporting material

In addition to, and separate from, your application form, you **must** submit the following support material online with your application form:

- A **draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) with each proposed service**. Alternatively, a **draft MOU with your local City/County Childcare committee** that confirms you will be supported to identify and agree the services in which you will work should your proposal be successful. Please use the **Memorandum of Understanding template** provided.
  Note: if funding is awarded, final MOUs must be provided in order to draw down payments.
- An up-to-date CV or biography for the applicant and for key collaborating artists, where relevant
- At least one and no more than three examples of the artist's or arts organisation's work.

Note: links to streaming platforms may be used to provide samples of work. Other supporting material – such as your detailed budget; a document containing all relevant CVs; and a document containing all relevant draft MOUs – must be uploaded as documents with your application. Please collate similar documents into a single pdf where possible – e.g. if working with more than one service, please collate and upload all relevant MOUs as a single pdf.

Additional material required in certain circumstances

- If you are seeking additional participant or personal disability access costs or audience disability access costs, please provide a document outlining these costs, and outlining how they have been arrived at. Please also ensure that you include this additional amount as part of your budget.

- If your proposal involves working with animals, you must provide a copy of your *Animal Welfare Protection Policies and Procedures*.

For applications involving children and young people under the age of eighteen

The Arts Council requires all individuals and organisations providing services (e.g. cultural, recreational, educational) to children and young people under the age of eighteen to have suitable child-protection policies and procedures in place. When making an application, you **must** indicate in section 1 of the application form whether or not your proposal is relevant to this age group.

- If you answer 'Yes' to this question in the application form and your application is successful, as a condition of funding you will be required to confirm and demonstrate that you have suitable child-protection policies and procedures in place.

- If successful, you will be required to complete the Arts Council's Child Protection and Welfare Quality Assurance Self-audit at https://childprotection.artscouncil.ie/. Please visit www.tusla.ie for more information on Children First.

- You will also be required to update your details in the Profile Information tab in your Online Services account (do this by going to the 'Update your account' section).

For applications involving vulnerable adults

When making an application, you **must** indicate in section 1 of the application form whether or not your proposal involves work with or for vulnerable persons. By ticking the Yes box, you are indicating that you will work with, or present work to, this cohort as part of your proposal, and that you acknowledge that you have familiarised yourself with and adhere to the *National Policy & Procedures on Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse** (see here).

* Please note that you may be asked to provide more evidence of adherence to these policies should your application be successful.

Format for supporting material
All supporting material for this funding programme **must be submitted online**. Hard-copy supporting material will not be accepted. Please follow these guidelines for the different kinds of supporting material.

For further information on the formats you may use for supporting material you wish to upload as part of your application, see section **2.3 Prepare any supporting material required for the application**.

1.7 Eligibility

Only artists and arts organisations meeting the definition in section 1.2 and applying in partnership with one or more eligible service(s) as outlined in section 1.1 (Strand 1 **or** Strand 2) or with a City/County Childcare Committee, which will assist in ensuring the participation of such services, will be considered eligible. The draft MOU(s) you submit with your application should clarify which eligible service(s) you will work with, **or** that your local City/County Childcare Committee is committed to supporting you to identify and agree the

relevant services should your application be successful. In addition, if you do not submit a fully completed application form along with all other required supporting material indicated in section 1.6, your application may be deemed ineligible.

2.   How to make your application

2.1   Register with the Arts Council's Online Services

All applications must be made through the Arts Council's Online Services; applications made in any other way (by post, fax or email) will not be accepted.

You must have an Online Services account to make an application. If you do not already have an Online Services account, sign up by filling out the registration form here: https://onlineservices.artscouncil.ie/register.aspx.

Within five working days you will be emailed a unique ARN (Artist Reference Number) and password that you can use to sign in to Online Services.

Requirements for using Online Services

Note: you will need to use a computer or laptop to submit your application. Our Online Services website does not work on phones or tablets.

Your computer and Internet browser will need to meet the following requirements to use Online Services successfully:

PC	• Windows 7 operating system or a newer version of Windows • OLS will work with the latest versions of all browsers – e.g. Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Safari, Mozilla Firefox
Mac	• Mac OS X v10.5 Leopard or a newer version of the Mac operating system • OLS will work with the latest versions of all browsers – e.g. Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Safari, Mozilla Firefox

Note: you will also need to have Microsoft Word (Desktop) or OpenOffice Writer installed to complete the application form itself. OpenOffice Writer is free software that can be downloaded here: https://www.openoffice.org.

OpenOffice Users

Please refer to our video *Using OpenOffice to download, complete and upload the application form* at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iT9XxgmgoEo

You **must** use OpenOffice Writer version 4.0.1 or earlier. More recent versions of OpenOffice Writer than 4.0.1 have changed how our application forms appear when they are submitted through Online Services.

Important notes for Apple Mac users

• Note the section in the YouTube video (at 1 min. 20 secs; link provided above) that deals with the issue of downloading version 4.0.1 on Macs with the operating system Mac OS Mojave or an earlier version installed.

- You cannot download OpenOffice 4.0.1 onto a Mac with the operating system Mac OS Catalina. If your Mac has this operating system or a newer version installed, you will have to download and use OpenOffice version 4.1.9 or newer.

If you cannot meet, or do not understand, any of these requirements, please contact us for advice as far as possible in advance of the deadline.

Give yourself enough time to complete the application

You should become familiar with the Online Services website well in advance of the deadline and in advance of preparing an application. It is likely that there will be heavy traffic on the site on the final afternoon of the closing date. You should prepare your application and submit it well in advance of the deadline.

Upload times can be much longer than download times. It may take longer than you think to upload your supporting materials.

Getting technical support

If you need technical support while making an online application, you can contact the Arts Council by emailing onlineservices@artscouncil.ie or by phoning 01 6180200/01 6180243. We recommend you report any technical issues with us well in advance of the deadline. Please provide a contact phone number and make sure that you are available to receive a return call from us.

We deal with queries on a first-come first-served basis.

Please note that there is often a high volume of calls as the deadline approaches and that technical-support calls received after 2.00pm on the closing date may not be resolved before the deadline.

2.2 Fill in the application form

If you have not already done so, download the application form for the award you wish to apply for. The application form is a Microsoft Word (Desktop)/OpenOffice Writer document that you fill in offline (on your own computer). The application form includes guidance on how to fill in each of its sections.

Note: the application form is formatted in such a way that the Arts Council can extract information from the form for assessment purposes. It is **very important** that you type inside the grey boxes in the form, and that you do not delete them and/or type outside them. If you do this, the form will not upload properly.

2.3 Prepare any supporting material required for the application

You are required to include supporting material with your application. For example, this might include a CV or samples of your current work – e.g. text, video, images or sound recordings (see section **1.6 Required supporting material)**

You must submit all such supporting material online – if necessary, you should scan or save material in electronic format.

Acceptable file formats

The following table lists file formats for your supporting material.

File type	File extension
text files	.rtf/.doc/.docx/.txt
image files	.jpg/.gif/.tiff/.png
sound files	.wav/.mp3/.m4a
video files	.avi/.mov/.mp4
spreadsheets	.xls/.xlsx
Adobe PDF files	.pdf

For convenience, gather together all the files you need in an accessible location on your computer.

Submitting URL links

Note: links to streaming platforms may be used to provide samples of work. Stand-alone supporting material, such as CVs and letters of support, etc., must be uploaded as separate documents with your application.

Instead of uploading material directly, you may provide links to material hosted on streaming platforms that do not limit access through financial subscription. To do this, copy the URL (the full address of where your material is hosted) into a Microsoft Word (Desktop)/OpenOffice Writer or PDF document and upload it as a weblink-supporting document.

While not an exclusive list, examples of acceptable sharing platforms would be YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, Bandcamp.

Please note that we will not accept links to the following sources:

- File-sharing sites – e.g. Google Drive, OneDrive
- Social-media platforms – e.g. Meta, Instagram
- Your personal website

Note: assessors will only view materials in the URL links that you provide. It is important that you check that any links in the document work **and** that they bring the viewer to the correct source to be able to access and view your supporting material.

Please do not flag your material as 'private' as it will not be accessible for the assessment. Change the settings on your video to 'unlisted' if you do not wish the application supporting material on your YouTube channel to be publicly viewable.

Naming files appropriately

Give all files that you intend to upload filenames that make it clear what they contain or represent – i.e. it should be clear from the filename whether the document is a CV, a sample text, or a review of previous work.

Please submit supporting documents in separate, appropriately named files.

Good filenames for an applicant called Jack Russell	russelljack Architecture Project application.doc russelljack performance clip.mp4 russelljack Architecture Project budget template.xls russelljack youtube link.doc

The total combined limit for all supporting material uploaded with a single application is **40MB**.

Note: characters not allowed in file names " * : < >? / \

2.4 Make your application online

To make your application online, you go through four main stages. Click **Save draft** at the end of each stage. You can come back to your application and revise it at any time before you finally submit it.

2.4.1 Choose a funding programme and download application form

To start a new application, click the **Make an application** button on your home page, and follow the prompts to choose the funding programme you wish to apply for and to give your application a unique reference by which to identify it. At this stage you can also download the application form (if you have not already done so).

2.4.2 Request funding amount

At this stage specify the expenditure and income related to your proposal, and the amount of funding you are requesting. The **Amount requested** should equal the **Total expenditure** minus the **Total income**. The final figures you enter here should be the same as those you enter in section 3 of the application form and in your detailed budget.

2.4.3 Upload application form and supporting material

Follow the prompts to upload your completed application form, CV or CVs, detailed budget and any other required supporting material (see section **1.6 required supporting material**). You do not have to upload everything at the same time. You can save your application as a draft and come back to it later.

Note: if you have completed your application form as a **.docx** file, and you are confident that your application form is filled in correctly (including typing inside the grey fields) but

Online Services displays a message saying 'Cannot upload form', please try saving it as a **.doc** file and uploading it again.

2.4.4 Submit application

When you are satisfied that you have uploaded everything you need to support your application and ticked the declaration, click **Submit**.

Once submitted, your application cannot be amended. Do not submit your application until you are completely satisfied.

You should receive two emails. The first will be issued immediately your application is received by the Arts Council. The second may arrive a few minutes later and will contain your application number, which will be used in all correspondence relating to this application. **Note**: it is important that you contact onlineservices@artscouncil.ie if you **do not** receive the second confirmation email containing the application number.

3. How we assess your application

3.1 Overview

The Arts Council considers all applications, makes decisions and communicates these to applicants in accordance with set procedures. The aim is to ensure that the system for making awards is fair and transparent

3.2 The assessment process

All applications received are processed by the Arts Council as follows:

1. Your application is checked for eligibility – all eligible applications then progress to the assessment stage.

2. Adviser(s) and/or staff make an assessment of the application.

3. Adviser(s) and/or staff recommend an application as shortlisted or not shortlisted.

4. A peer panel reviews all shortlisted applications and associated materials, then scores and makes decisions.

5. Decisions are communicated in writing to applicants.

6. Decisions are noted by Council.

3.3 Criteria for the assessment of applications

Application forms and supporting material will be assessed and scored against the following criteria:

a) Diversity

Across the scheme, we aim to achieve a diversity of ages, services and artforms. As part of our selection process, and based on the applications provided, we will aim to support:

- Early learning and childcare services in different parts of the country
- A diverse range of artists and artforms

- Participation of groups from birth–3-year-olds; 4–6-year-olds; and one or more groups of 7+-year-olds (Strand 1 and Strand 3 only).

- Early learning and childcare services where the work will take place through Irish
- A mix of urban, rural and small-town services

- A mix of private and community-based services

- Priority will be given to services working with children experiencing disadvantage and which have a focus on inclusion.

In addition, proposals will be assessed according to the following criteria:

b) The quality and suitability of the proposal

- Track record of the proposed artist/arts organisation

- Potential for creative collaboration between the artist/arts organisation, early years educators, school-age practitioners, families and carers, and any other partners as appropriate

- Potential of the proposal to develop and enhance the practice of the artist or arts organisation, the partner services, and any other partners

- Opportunities for participating children, artists, families, carers, early years educators and school-age practitioners to have a voice in the development and delivery of the proposal in a manner that is ambitious, original and collaborative.

c) **The extent to which the proposal meets the purpose of the award**

- See section 1.1 above.

d) **The feasibility of the proposal**

- Clear and complete application form and supporting material

- Clear and feasible projected income and expenditure set out in section 3.1 of the application form, which is consistent with the commitments made in your attached draft MOUs and your approach to artists' pay

- Active relationships with the proposed services and/or City/County Childcare Committee as demonstrated in the attached draft MOUs

- Experience of the applicant in delivering collaborative artistic projects and liaising and planning with partner services

- A schedule and process that will support shared planning and reflection, and will enable the development of bespoke collaborative engagements

- Appropriate plans and allocation of resources to document, reflect on and share the outcomes of the proposal

- Suitability of resources that partners will make available to support the proposal

- Demonstration of fair payment and conditions for participating artists. The Arts Council has published a [policy](#) on the fair and equitable remuneration and contracting of artists. It is important that you read this policy in advance of making your application.

- Demonstration of in-kind or other supports from partner services and other partners.

3.4 Peer panel

The purpose of peer-panel meetings is to allow for a diversity of expert views to inform the decision-making process. Peer panels normally consist of at least three external adjudicators with relevant artform and/or arts-practice and contextual expertise.

Each meeting is usually led by an Arts Council member acting as non-voting chair. Arts Council advisers and staff attend as required, and those involved in the initial assessment of applications are on hand to provide information as required. Panellists have access to all

shortlisted applications and associated materials prior to the day of the meeting, at which point they review, discuss and score shortlisted applications. Following this, applications are ranked by score. In light of the competitive context and the available budget, it is likely that the Arts Council will be able to fund only a proportion of the applications received.

Scoring process

The panel is asked to score applications according to the following system:

- A – Must Fund (10 points): this means that, in the view of the panel member, the application is deemed to have fully met the criteria for the award and merits funding on that basis, to the amount requested where possible.

- B – Should Fund (8 points): this means that, in the view of the panel member, the application is deemed to have met the criteria to an extent sufficient to merit funding should resources allow.

- C – Could Fund (5 points): this means that, in the view of the panel member, the application is deemed to have met the criteria, but to a lesser extent within the competitive context than other applications.

- D – Not a Priority (2 points): this means that, in the view of the panel member, the application is deemed to have not met the criteria to an extent sufficient to merit funding.

Declaration of interest

In order to ensure fairness and equity in decision-making, a panel member must declare an interest where they have a close personal or professional link with the applicant or are linked in any way with the application. An 'interest' is either 'pecuniary' or 'non-pecuniary' (e.g. familial relationships, personal partnerships, or formal or informal business partnerships, etc.).

The interest must be declared as soon as the panellist becomes aware of it. This may be at the point when they are approached to sit on the panel (if the 'interest' is known at that stage) or following receipt of the list of applicants. Where an interest is declared, the panellist will not receive papers relating to that applicant and will be required to leave the room when the specific application is being reviewed. Where this situation arises, the chair will vote in lieu of the panellist.

In some instances a panellist may not realise that a conflict of interest exists until they receive and review the panel papers. In such instances the panellist must alert an Arts Council staff member or the panel chair as soon as they become aware that a conflict may exist.

In the event of two panellists declaring a conflict of interest for the same application, the chair will be part of the decision-making process for that specific application.

If the nominated panel chair has a conflict of interest they must declare it in writing in advance of the meeting as soon as they become aware of it. In this instance the head of team will chair the discussion on the conflicted application.

3.5 Outcome of applications

All applicants are informed in writing about the outcome of their application.

You will be informed by email if your application has not been shortlisted. If your application has been shortlisted, it will go forward for panel review.

If your application is successful, you will be sent a letter of offer detailing the amount of funding you have been awarded and the terms and conditions of the award. You will also be told how to go about drawing down your award.

The Arts Council receives a large volume of applications, and demand for funding always exceeds the available resources. If your application is not successful, you can request feedback from Arts Council staff. Eligibility and compliance with application procedures alone do not guarantee receipt of an award.

Unsuccessful applicants are not eligible to apply for another Arts Council award to undertake the same activity. If the Arts Council feels that the proposed activity would have been better suited to a different award programme, an exception may be made. In such circumstance you will be informed in writing.

Appeals

Applicants may appeal against a funding decision on the basis of an alleged infringement or unfair application of, or deviation from, the Arts Council's published procedures. If you feel that the Arts Council's procedures have not been followed, please see the appeals process at http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/fundInfo/funding_appeals.aspx or contact the Arts Council for a copy of the appeals-process information sheet.